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ABSTRACT

Guidance on the administration, scoring, and reporting of new state tests for teachers and administrators is provided. The tests are designed to track the English Language Arts and Mathematics proficiency of students in the 4th and 8th grade. Regents examinations assessing the English, Mathematics, Social Studies, and Science proficiency of high school students are also discussed. The report is divided into three sections: (1) "Schedule and Description of New Assessments"; (2) "Scoring of Tests"; and (3) "Collecting and Reporting Scores." Additional sections cover alternatives to the Regents examinations and criteria for school accountability. Appendix A entitled, "General Provisions Concerning Students with Disabilities and Limited English Proficient Students," is included; Appendix B entitled, "Examination Schedules for June and August 1999," is not included in this document. (SWM)

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April 1999

TO: All Teachers and Administrators in Public and Nonpublic Schools

FROM: James A. Kadamus

SUBJECT: Guidance on the 1998-99 New State Assessment System

Through the work of schools and school districts throughout the State, New York is implementing a revised assessment system that reflects higher learning standards. The new grade 4 English language arts test was administered in January. In June, the new State tests will be administered in grades 4 and 8 in mathematics and in grade 8 in English language arts. Many 11th grade students will take the revised Regents Comprehensive Examination in English, and the Mathematics A Regents Examination will be administered for the first time. The grades 3 and 6 Pupil Evaluation Program (PEP) tests in mathematics and reading and the grades 8 and 9 Preliminary Competency Tests (PCT) in reading and writing are being replaced by the new tests in grades 4 and 8. The PEP grade 5 writing test will be administered for the last time in May 1999.

These more challenging tests are tied to the higher learning standards and revised graduation requirements and are aligned across grade levels. As curriculum and instruction are aligned with the standards, the entire kindergarten through grade 12 program should prepare students for meeting higher expectations. The new tests that elementary and middle school students will take this year will show whether they are getting the foundation knowledge they need to succeed in later grades. Under the revised graduation requirements, high school students will be required to take and pass Regents examinations that reflect higher standards in English, mathematics, science, and social studies in order to graduate.

This document provides teachers and administrators with additional guidance on the administration, scoring, and reporting of the new tests. The presented information applies to all public school students. The decision about how nonpublic school students will be included in the program requirements will be made this fall. Additional information on the learning standards, revised graduation requirements, and the new State assessment system are available on the Department's website at www.nysed.gov . The website also includes resource and core curriculum guides. You may also call the Office of Curriculum and Instruction at (518) 474-5922 or the Office of State Assessment at (518) 474-5099.

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SCHEDULE AND DESCRIPTION OF NEW GRADES 4 AND 8 TESTS

Elementary and Intermediate Levels

- In April 1994, the Board of Regents approved a plan to revise the State assessment system based on the learning standards.
- The first pilot tests for the revised tests in English language arts and mathematics were conducted in May 1995.
- Copies of these pilot tests, teacher manuals with scoring guides, and sample student papers were distributed to all schools in December 1995.
- A second series of pilot tests was conducted in May 1996, and copies of those tests and teacher manuals were distributed to all schools.
- A third pilot test was conducted in October 1997 to develop test sampler drafts for the new tests.
- The test samplers were distributed in February 1998 to all schools, along with informational brochures for parents.
- Field tests for grade 4 English language arts were conducted in January 1998, and in May 1998 for grade 8 English language arts and grades 4 and 8 mathematics.

The grades 4 and 8 tests in English language arts and mathematics have been developed through a contract with CTB/McGraw-Hill. In early January 1999, test coordinators and teachers received detailed instructions on how to administer these tests. The grade 4 English language arts test was administered from January 11-15, 1999. Additional days were allowed for administration of the test because of winter storms.

The following tests will be administered on the dates listed below:

Grade 4 mathematics	June 2, 3, and 4, 1999
Grade 8 English language arts	June 1 and 2, 1999
Grade 8 mathematics	June 3 and 4, 1999

These tests require students not only to demonstrate basic skills in English and mathematics, but also to apply the knowledge and skills they have learned. In addition to answering multiple-choice questions that measure basic comprehension skills in English, students will write compositions to explain their understanding of what they have heard and read and to demonstrate their ability to use the skills of spelling, grammar, punctuation, sentence formation, and paragraphing. For mathematics, multiple-choice questions measure student understanding of basic mathematics and arithmetic skills. Students will also support their solutions to mathematics problems, showing the steps they used in the solution and explaining the mathematical processes and concepts involved. The proportion and weight of the key ideas being tested will vary by grade level. A description of the format of these tests and the administration time follows:

Description of Elementary Level Tests

Grade 4 English Language Arts

All public school students who entered fourth grade in September 1998 or thereafter were required to take the new English language arts test. Appendix A explains the exceptions for students with disabilities as well as the provisions for students classified as limited English proficient.

The new English language arts test is administered over three days. This year's administration took place between January 11-15, 1999. The test will gauge student achievement of the learning standards at the elementary level. It will assess the learning standards for information and understanding, literary response and expression, and critical analysis and evaluation.

In Session I, students are required to:

- Read 5 passages and answer 28 multiple-choice questions. (45 minutes)

In Session II, Part 1, students are required to:

- Listen to a passage read by the teacher, write 2 short responses and 1 extended response. (30 minutes)

In Session II, Part 2, students are required to:

- Write a composition. (30 minutes)

In Session III, students are required to:

- Read 2 related passages and write 3 short responses and 1 extended response. (60 minutes)

Grade 4 Mathematics

All public school students who entered fourth grade in September 1998 and thereafter must take the new mathematics test. Appendix A explains the exceptions for students with disabilities as well as the provisions for students classified as limited English proficient.

The test will gauge student achievement of the learning standards at the elementary level. It will measure student understanding of the key ideas of mathematical reasoning, numbers and numeration, operations, modeling/multiple representation, measurement, uncertainty, and patterns and functions. Calculators are not permitted on the test. However, punch-out manipulatives of ruler, counters, and pattern blocks are provided.

The new mathematics test will be administered in three sessions on June 2, 3, and 4, 1999.

In Session I, students are required to:

- Answer 30 multiple-choice questions. (40 minutes)

In Session II, students are required to:

- Answer 7 short open-ended questions and 2 extended open-ended questions, either mathematically or in writing. (50 minutes)

In Session III, students are required to:

- Answer 7 short open-ended questions and 2 extended open-ended questions, either mathematically and/or in writing. (50 minutes)

With the approval of our test developers, and in conjunction with comments from field test teachers, the times listed for the grades 4 and 8 mathematics tests are a slight extension from the times used for last spring's field tests for grades 4 and 8. Teachers should note that the testing times differ from those previously included in the Test Samplers.

Description of Intermediate Level Tests

Grade 8 English Language Arts

All public school students who entered eighth grade in September 1998 and thereafter must take the new English language arts test. Appendix A explains the exceptions for students with disabilities as well as the provisions for students classified as limited English proficient.

The new English language arts test will be administered in two sessions on June 1 and 2, 1999. The test will gauge student achievement of the learning standards at the intermediate level. It will assess the learning standards for information and understanding, literary response and expression, and critical analysis and evaluation.

In Session I, students are required to:

- Read 4 passages and answer 25 multiple-choice questions.
- Listen to a passage and write 3 short responses and 1 extended response. (90 minutes)

In Session II, students are required to:

- Read 2 related passages and write 3 short responses and 1 extended response.
- Write a composition. (90 minutes)

Grade 8 Mathematics

All students who entered eighth grade in September 1998 and thereafter must take the new mathematics test. Appendix A explains the exceptions for students with disabilities as well as the provisions for students classified as limited English proficient.

The test will gauge student achievement of the learning standards at the intermediate level. It will measure student understanding of the key ideas of mathematical reasoning, numbers and numeration, operations, modeling/multiple representation, measurement, uncertainty, and patterns and functions. Calculators are not permitted on the multiple-choice portion of the test. On the remainder of the test, students must use at least a four function, square root key calculator. Scientific calculators are recommended. Punch-out manipulatives of ruler and protractor will be provided.

The new mathematics test will be administered in two sessions on June 3 and 4, 1999.

In Session I, students are required to:

- Answer 27 multiple-choice questions. (35 minutes)
- Answer 4 short open-ended response questions, and 2 extended open-ended response questions, either mathematically and/or in writing. (35 minutes)

In Section II, students are required to:

- Answer 8 short open-ended response questions and 4 extended open-ended response questions, either mathematically and/or in writing. (70 minutes)

Future New Tests

New tests in social studies and science at the elementary and intermediate grade levels are being developed and field tested. A future update will contain more detailed information about these tests. The first administration of these tests is scheduled as follows:

Grade 4 science	Spring 2000
Grade 5 social studies	November 2000
Grade 8 science	Spring 2001
Grade 8 social studies	June 2001

Description of Commencement Level Examinations

General Provisions – Passing Scores and Diplomas

- The Regents Competency Tests are being phased out during the period 1999-2004. During that period, local schools may use 55-64 as the passing score on Regents examinations to meet local diploma requirements. A passing score of 65 is required for a Regents diploma.

- Local diplomas may be awarded through June 2004.

- For students entering 9th grade in 2000, the passing score on Regents examinations in English and social studies will be 65 for either diploma.

- Students entering 9th grade in 2001 will be the first class of students who must take and pass five Regents examinations with a score of 65 in order to graduate. The required examinations will be English, mathematics, global history and geography, United States history and government, and science.

Regents Examination - English

All students who first entered ninth grade in September 1996 or thereafter must take and pass the revised Regents Comprehensive Examination in English. Appendix A explains the exceptions for students with disabilities as well as the provisions for students classified as limited English proficient.

The revised Regents Comprehensive Examination in English will gauge student achievement of the learning standards at the commencement level. The examination will be administered in two sessions of three hours each. Many students may not need the entire three-hour sessions allowed to complete each part of the examination. The three hours provide adequate time so students are not rushed to complete their answers.

Session 1 will be administered on Friday, June 18, 1999; Session 2 will be administered on Wednesday, June 23, 1999.

In Session 1, students are required to:

- Listen to a speech, answer 6 multiple-choice questions, and use information from the speech to write a response for a specific purpose and audience.
- Read a text and related graphic, answer 10 multiple-choice questions, and use information from both documents to write a response for a specific purpose and audience.

In Session 2, students are required to:

- Read two literary texts, answer 10 multiple-choice questions, and write an essay discussing the theme and the author's use of literary elements and techniques.
- Interpret a written statement given to them about some aspect of literature and write an essay using two works they have read to support their interpretation.

Regents Examinations - Mathematics

Students who entered ninth grade in September 1997 or thereafter will be required to take a Regents examination, either the Sequential Mathematics, Course I, or the revised Mathematics A Regents Examination. Appendix A explains the exceptions for students with disabilities as well as the provisions for students classified as limited English proficient. The Mathematics A Regents Examination will be administered for the first time on Tuesday, June 22, 1999; the Sequential Mathematics, Course I, Examination will also be administered on June 22, 1999.

The Mathematics A Regents Examination will gauge student achievement of the learning standards at the commencement level. The examination will include algebra, geometry, basic probability and statistics, logic, and trigonometry. School districts have the option to administer either this examination or the Sequential Mathematics, Course I, examination through January 2002. Scientific calculators are required for both examinations. Graphing calculators will be permitted (not required) for the Mathematics A Regents Examination starting in June 2000.

Students taking these examinations must achieve minimum scores as follows:

Sequential Mathematics, Course I, Examination:	a minimum score of 65 for a local diploma or 55, if the Board of Education or nonpublic school approved this option
Sequential Mathematics, Courses I and II, Examinations:	a minimum score of 65 for a Regents diploma
Mathematics A Regents Examination:	a minimum score of 65 for a Regents diploma, or 55 for a local diploma, if the Board of Education or nonpublic school approved this option

Schedule for 1999 Regents Examinations

The schedules for the administration of all June 1999 and August 1999 commencement level examinations are included in Appendix B.

The current forms of examinations in subjects other than English or mathematics will continue to be used until the new State assessments are completed.

Regents Examinations – Social Studies

The revised Regents examinations in social studies are being developed and field-tested. The anticipated dates for first administration of these examinations are:

Global history and geography (includes geography, economics and government)	June 2000
United States history and government (includes geography and economics)	June 2001

The revised examinations in global history and geography and United States history and government will each emphasize the analysis of documents. The components of each of the examinations include:

- multiple-choice questions (55 percent);
- one thematic essay (15 percent); and
- one document-based task (15 percent on document questions; 15 percent on essay).

The thematic question requires students to write a cohesive essay, including an introduction, body, and conclusion, about a significant theme or concept from global history and geography or United States history. The document-based question asks students to analyze documents about an important historical issue or question and write an essay using the documents and their knowledge of social studies.

The constructed response questions earlier proposed for these tests have been eliminated from the design.

Regents Examinations - Science

The revised Regents examinations in science are being developed and field-tested. The anticipated dates for first administration of these new examinations are:

Physical setting: Earth science	June 2001
Living environment: biology	June 2001
Physical setting: chemistry	June 2002
Physical setting: physics	June 2002

The new examinations will have greater emphasis on application of content and skills. The components of each of these examinations are still under discussion but will include:

- multiple-choice questions and short open-ended response questions (60-70 percent);
- extended open-ended response questions (15-25 percent); and
- laboratory performance tasks (approximately 15 percent).

The multiple-choice and/or the short open-ended response questions require students to apply, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate material. The extended open-ended response questions require that students apply their knowledge of science concepts and skills. Students will be asked to apply scientific concepts, formulate hypotheses, make predictions, or use other scientific inquiry techniques in their responses to the questions posed.

The prerequisite of 1200 minutes of laboratory experience and reports indicating successful completion of that experience will still be required for admission into the examinations.

SCORING OF TESTS

Regional Scoring of English Language Arts Tests, Grades 4 and 8

Producing reliable scores on new State tests having open-ended responses, compositions, and multiple-step mathematics problems presented a significant challenge. After consultation with testing experts and field practitioners, the Department determined that the new grades 4 and 8 English language arts tests would be scored using a regional scoring process. Technical experts agree that, in the initial years of administering a new test so different from the previous test, it is critical to ensure quality and reliability in scoring. After the State Education Department reviews the experience of the first two administrations of the tests, the decision regarding scoring procedures for subsequent years will be made.

A regional scoring process offers the greatest local flexibility and the following advantages:

- Regional scoring includes training of local teachers, thereby providing teachers an opportunity to understand both the performance standards and scoring criteria for the tests and to experience a wide range of student responses.
- Regional scoring makes it feasible and efficient to provide consistent high quality scoring training for teachers from every elementary and middle school.
- Because of the common training and the opportunity for teachers to work together scoring a wide range of papers, regional scoring provides a better means for ensuring common performance standards statewide.
- The combination of training and scoring in the same session provides an assurance of valid, reliable, and trustworthy scores.
- Districts may use superintendent's conference days as released time for teachers who are scoring.
- Using a regional scoring model for the first two years will establish sound statewide baseline data for new tests.
- The training received and exposure to student papers provide valuable experience in how the learning standards can be implemented in student classroom work and homework.
- Districts have access to a number of sources to cover costs for administering and scoring the examinations, including Standards Implementation Aid, BOCES Aid, and Mandated Services Aid (for nonpublic schools).

Regional Scoring

Regional scoring relies on the statewide collaboration of the Department, BOCES, district offices of the large city school districts, school administrators and teachers, and participating nonpublic school organizations. Department staff and regional leaders from these agencies worked together to ensure a high-quality process in which local scoring leaders are trained by Measurement Incorporated; scoring is conducted at regional sites across the State; teachers participate in a training and scoring day at a site within their region; papers and teachers from a school are sent to the same site; and papers are distributed so that all teachers score papers from a range of schools.

Description of Regional Scoring Process

- Teachers of grades 3, 4, and 5 may score the grade 4 English language arts test. Preferably, these teachers teach the subject being tested, but "special" teachers (e.g., reading, special education, English as a second language) may also participate.
- For the grade 8 English language arts test, teachers of grades 6, 7, and 8 may score; English teachers or "special" teachers who work with students in grade 8 are preferred.
- Measurement Incorporated will conduct scoring training sessions for the grade 8 English language arts test across the State between June 7 and 11.
- Approximately 50-60 trainers will be trained at each site. These lead teachers will then train other teachers in their own region to serve as table leaders.
- Scoring for the 8th grade English language arts test may take place anytime from June 14 through 30.

Local Scoring of Mathematics Tests, Grades 4 and 8

The Department has determined that the new grades 4 and 8 mathematics tests will be scored locally.

- Measurement Incorporated will train scoring leaders from local school districts during the week of June 7.
- On scoring day, teachers will be trained to use the scoring rubrics to determine scores.
- Teacher scorers will score about 60 test papers.
- Ten percent of the papers will be rescored to provide information on inter-rater reliability.
- Scoring must be completed by June 30.

Scoring Regents Examinations

The revised Regents Comprehensive Examination in English and the Mathematics A Regents Examination will be scored locally. This past summer, the Department conducted turnkey training for teachers who will train lead teachers from each school district on scoring and classroom instructions for these examinations. Lead teachers will then train teachers within a school district to score them.

Regents Comprehensive Examination in English

For the Regents Comprehensive Examination in English, administrators will receive specific scoring procedures prior to the administration of the examination. A team of teachers will score each examination. Qualified teachers of English, reading, English as a second language, and special education who know the English curriculum and have received training may be asked to score the examination. For the four compositions, teachers will assign only holistic scores. The process of arriving at a holistic score requires close attention to the qualities (meaning, development, organization, language use, conventions) and has proven to be an efficient method of scoring student responses.

Students will receive an examination booklet and an essay booklet for each session. The multiple-choice answer sheet will be attached to the examination booklet. Schools are responsible for providing scrap paper for students to use in planning responses. School personnel who wish to design their own scannable answer sheets will need one for Session 1 (16 questions with four numbered options per question) and one for Session 2 (10 questions with four numbered options per question). Scannable answer sheets will not be provided to schools this year.

To assure reliable scoring, principals of each high school requesting the June 1999 Regents Comprehensive Examination in English must ensure that the following procedures are adhered to:

- Appoint a scoring coordinator who will conduct training and manage the logistics of the scoring process.
- Provide task-specific training just prior to scoring.
- Assign two teachers to score each task, with a third teacher available to resolve discrepant scores.

The following materials will be provided for use in training and scoring the examination:

- Detailed directions for scoring papers and determining the final raw score;
- Final scoring rubrics for Parts I, II, III, and IV;
- Annotated anchor papers for each score level;
- Pre-scored practice papers;
- Procedures for resolving discrepant scores; and
- A chart for converting the raw scores to an equivalent score on a 100-point scale.

Mathematics A Regents Examination

The Math A Regents Examination will be scored by teacher committees. No one teacher will score all of one student's paper. A committee of at least three teachers will score a student's paper by having each teacher responsible for scoring a selected number of open-ended questions. The more teachers on the scoring committee, the fewer questions each teacher scores.

A conversion chart, which will assign a specific Regents grade (0-100) to the total raw score (0-85) of the test, will be sent to schools for each administration. These charts may differ slightly from year to year.

All student papers that are within a certain number of points of a cut score (passing grade) must be double scored. That means either another committee of teachers scores the papers or teachers score other problems than they did in the first scoring. Since graduation is dependent on a student's score, this second scoring is necessary. The number of points that will trigger this double scoring will be based on each test's statistics and will be listed with the conversion chart.

Schools will receive the following materials for use on scoring day:

- answers to multiple-choice questions;
- specific rubrics for each open-ended question;
- a scale to convert each raw score to a Regents score; and
- a point value which will trigger a second scoring if a student falls below a cut score by that margin or less.

The current processes for administering and scoring the other Regents examinations will continue.

COLLECTING AND REPORTING SCORES

Elementary and Intermediate Level

Scores will be computed from the answer sheets that will be sent from scoring sites to city school district scanning sites for the Big Five school districts, to the Department for nonpublic schools, and to Regional Information Centers (RICs) for all others. The scores will be scanned onto a computer file (data tape) which each scanning site will send to CTB/McGraw-Hill where score reports will be generated. Score reports for individual students and schools will be sent to school districts directly from CTB/McGraw-Hill. A guide for school administrators for interpreting and using the results of the grade 4 English language arts test will be mailed in April.

Grade 4 English Language Arts Test

Based on their overall performance on the grade 4 English language arts examination, students will be placed at one of four levels of performance. The descriptions of the performance levels were developed as a formal part of the standard setting study. This study involved intensive deliberation by New York State teachers who are subject matter experts. These experts determined, based on the learning standards, what students at each of the four performance levels should know and be able to

do, and which test questions they should be able to answer correctly. These decisions were informed by the field test data, and will be reviewed against the actual test results. Descriptions of the four English language arts performance levels follow:

LEVEL 4

*At **Level 4**, test scores indicate student performance exceeds the standards and the student is moving toward high performance on the Regents examination. The student demonstrates superior knowledge and skill for each standard area of English language arts for elementary students and proficient intermediate skills in listening, reading, and writing delineated in the Learning Standards.*

Students consistently demonstrate understanding of written and oral text beyond the literal level. They can analyze and interpret a variety of texts, identify significant story elements, compare and synthesize information from related texts, and form insightful opinions, using extensive supporting details. Students' writing is well organized, thoroughly developed, and uses sophisticated and effective language, with few or no errors in spelling, grammar, or punctuation.

LEVEL 3

*At **Level 3**, test scores indicate student performance at least meets the standards and, with continued steady growth, the student should pass the Regents examination. The student demonstrates knowledge and skills for each standard of English language arts for elementary students and some intermediate skills in listening, reading, and writing delineated in the Learning Standards.*

Students demonstrate understanding of written and oral text with some attention to meaning beyond the literal level. They can gather information, make inferences, identify theme or main idea, understand character actions, and make connections between two related texts, providing some supporting information. Students' writing is generally focused and organized, with minor errors in spelling, grammar, or punctuation that do not interfere with readability.

LEVEL 2

*At **Level 2**, test scores indicate the student will need extra help to meet the standards and pass the Regents examination. The student demonstrates some knowledge and skills for each standard of English language arts or full proficiency in one or two of the assessed standards for elementary students, but none of the intermediate skills in listening, reading, or writing delineated in the Learning Standards.*

Students demonstrate partial understanding of written and oral text at a literal level. They can recognize basic story elements, make some inferences, and identify some similarities and differences in two related texts, providing limited supporting information. Students' writing shows some focus and basic organization, and uses simple sentence structure and vocabulary. Students follow some rules for correct spelling, grammar, and punctuation, but errors sometimes interfere with readability.

LEVEL 1

At **Level 1**, test scores indicate the student has serious academic deficiencies. This student needs the most help to meet the standards. The student demonstrates no evidence of proficiency at all in one or more of the standards of English language arts for elementary students and does not reach proficiency in any of the three standards.

Students demonstrate minimal understanding of written and oral text. They can locate and recall some stated information, and attempt to construct short and extended responses. Students' writing consists of brief, general, or repetitive statements, and reveals difficulty in organizing thoughts. Errors in spelling, grammar, and punctuation interfere with readability and comprehension.

Cut Scores for Grades 4 and 8

Cut scores for these performance levels will not be made final until after the tests are given. The method used to set the cut scores requires the ordering of the test questions from least difficult to most difficult. This ordering is based on extensive field testing across the State. To assure that this ordering of questions applies to the whole student population, an analysis will be made on the whole student population taking the test before the cut scores are adopted. While extensive pilot testing of questions was conducted across the State, there is not enough assurance that the pilots were representative of the entire student population statewide. The cut scores will represent the level of performance expected in achieving the higher standards.

School Report Card

Elementary and Intermediate Level

The summary of 1998-99 school results on the grades 4 and 8 tests will be included on the 2000 School Report Card. The summary will include the performance of all students who were tested, including students with disabilities who participated in the testing program. On the 2000 School Report Card, the results of the May 1999 PEP grade 5 writing test will also be reported. Consistent with reporting practice in previous years on this test, the results of general education students will be reported separately from those of students receiving special education services. Directions for collecting and reporting results of the grades 4 and 8 mathematics tests will be distributed as soon as they are available.

Performance levels for grades 4 and 8 mathematics and grade 8 English language arts tests are still being developed and will be included in a future publication.

Commencement Level

Summary data for the Regents Comprehensive Examination in English, the Mathematics A Regents Examination, and the Sequential Mathematics, Course I, Examination will be added to the 2000 School Report Card. As in previous years, these data will be collected on the Regents Examination Report due on July 15, 1999. Schools must report the highest score for each student on a Regents English examination taken in August 1998, January 1999, or June 1999. In addition, beginning with the January 1999 Regents examination administrations, the Department will collect Regents English and mathematics results for those students for whom these Regents examinations are a graduation requirement. Students are required to score at least 65 for a Regents diploma. They may, at the district's discretion, score no lower than 55 to meet local diploma requirements. For test-development

purposes, schools will be asked to report results on all students who take the new Regents Comprehensive Examination in English in June.

ALTERNATIVE ASSESSMENTS TO REGENTS EXAMINATIONS/ TEST VARIANCES

A State Assessment Panel was formed to review examinations proposed as alternatives to the required Regents examinations. Approved alternatives must meet the following criteria:

- be aligned with the State standards and be at least as rigorous as the corresponding required Regents examination;
- meet technical standards for validity, reliability, and freedom from bias;
- be externally developed and administered under secure conditions; and
- be available for use by any school or school district in New York State.

The State Assessment Panel has recommended to the Commissioner of Education and he has approved the following examinations. The acceptable passing scores for each of these examinations will be determined and announced in Spring 1999 before the June examination period.

Alternatives to the Regents Comprehensive Examination in English:

- The Advanced Placement Language and Composition examination.
- The Advanced Placement Literature and Composition examination.
- The International Baccalaureate English Standard Level assessment.

Alternatives to the Mathematics A Regents *and* the Sequential Mathematics, Courses I and II Regents Examinations:

- The International Baccalaureate Mathematics Studies Standard Level assessment.

The State Assessment Panel will continue to review applications for alternative assessments.

Existing testing variances for required Regents examinations will continue until the corresponding revised Regents examination is in place. After that time, the Department will no longer grant testing variances for required State examinations, since all alternative assessments must be reviewed and recommended for approval by the State Assessment Panel and be approved for use by the Commissioner.

SCHOOL ACCOUNTABILITY

The implementation of the new State assessment system and the phase-in of new graduation requirements require that the State's school accountability program be modified. Department staff will present proposals to the Board of Regents this fall that will address the following issues:

- Revised performance targets for Schools Under Registration Review, schools for which Local Assistance Plans are required, and Title I schools required to demonstrate adequate yearly progress
- Revised criteria for the identification of elementary, middle, and high schools for registration review
- Revised criteria for the identifying schools that must complete a Local Assistance Plan
- New procedures to ensure that the performance of all students, including students who do not participate in the State assessment program, who are educated outside the home school district, or who transfer to programs leading to a high school equivalency diploma are reported
- New procedures to extend the school accountability system to special and alternative schools and programs
- New procedures to recognize the achievement of high-performing schools
- Revision of the School Report Card to align it with the revised school accountability program
- Timeline for the implementation of a modified school accountability program

Proposals on these issues will be developed in consultation with district superintendents, superintendents, principals, teachers, union and school board representatives, and other interested parties. Public comment will be solicited prior to approval by the Board of Regents of amendments to the Commissioner's Regulations.

APPENDIX A

General Provisions Concerning Students with Disabilities and Limited English Proficient Students

Students with Disabilities

The majority of students with disabilities have the ability to satisfy the requirements for a diploma if they are afforded access to the general education curriculum and provided appropriate special education supports and services. In order for students with disabilities to be prepared to take the revised Regents examinations, it is critical that they participate in Regents level coursework and statewide testing programs with allowable testing accommodations as documented on their Individual Educational Programs (IEP).

For a small number of students with disabilities, the Committee on Special Education (CSE) may determine that it is not appropriate for the student to participate in a State assessment and will exempt him/her from the examination and identify on the IEP how the student will be assessed. Some of the students with disabilities who are determined by the CSE to be exempt from a State examination are students with severe disabilities. An alternate assessment system will be developed by July 2000 that will measure the progress of students with severe disabilities in meeting the standards and alternate performance indicators.

One of the safety net provisions approved by the Board of Regents at its November 1997 meeting was for students with disabilities pursuing a Regents or local high school diploma. The safety net is authorized for students with disabilities identified by the school district's CSE or determined to be qualified handicapped by a Section 504 Multidisciplinary Team (MDT) prior to July 1, 1997. The Commissioner will establish exceptions allowing certain students with disabilities, identified on or after July 1, 1997, to participate in safety net provisions. The safety net has two major components:

- During the phase-in of the revised examination requirements (for classes entering 9th grade between September 1996 and September 2000) students with disabilities will take each Regents examination required for the entering class. If a student fails the Regents examination students with disabilities in the entering class may take the Regents competency test (RCT) in that subject area(s) in order to satisfy the examination requirement and meet diploma requirements.

- Baseline data will be gathered from the results of the students taking each examination to determine performance expectations for future years.

Limited English Proficient Students

Limited English Proficient (LEP) students who score at or above the 30th percentile on an English reading test will take the new grades 4 and 8 English language arts and mathematics tests. The mathematics tests will be translated into four languages: Chinese, Haitian Creole, Russian, and Spanish. LEP students speaking those languages may take the mathematics test in the native language or in English, at the discretion of their ESL and/or bilingual teachers. LEP students who score at or above the 30th percentile on an English reading test for which there is no translated version of the content area examination must take the tests in English.

Those LEP students who score at or below the 29th percentile on an English reading test or have been enrolled in a United States school for five years or less, may be exempted from the New York State English language arts assessments. However, the English achievement of these LEP students must be reported through the Local Education Accountability Program (LEAP) to the Department, based on the performance standards and assessment requirements under CR Part 154.

All students, including LEP students, regardless of when they enter the New York State school system, must pass the Regents Comprehensive Examination in English, beginning with the graduating class of June 2000, in order to receive a diploma from New York State. Content area Regents examinations required for graduation will be translated into: Chinese, Haitian Creole, Korean, Russian, and Spanish. LEP students speaking these languages, who first enter school in the United States in grade 9 or later, may take the translated version of these tests.

When pupils whose native language is other than English take Regents examinations in subjects other than English and the foreign languages, they may use foreign language dictionaries and glossaries if these aids provide only word-for-word translations. LEP students may use bilingual glossaries or word-for-word translations of key mathematics terms as long as they do not provide definitions of the terms or provide LEP students with any test advantage. The draft mathematics glossaries are available from the Department in Bengali, Burmese, Chinese (Simplified and Traditional), Haitian Creole, Korean, Russian, Spanish, and Vietnamese. Glossaries for social studies and science are under development.

Oral translations into languages for which there are no written translated version of grade 4 and 8 content area tests may be provided by the school. Pupils whose native language is other than English may also be provided with the services of a translator when they take Regents examinations in subjects other than English and the foreign languages. All translations must be oral, word-for-word translations. Written translations are not allowed.

LEP students are allowed extended test time for State examinations. At a minimum, if needed, they should be allowed "time and a half;" that is, the required testing time plus one-half of that amount. Principals should consult with the pupil's classroom teacher in making determinations of need for extended time. Under no circumstances may such an administration extend beyond the scheduled examination date.

Prior permission need not be obtained from the Department to use this testing accommodation. However, a report concerning each use, including the amount of additional time allotted, must be sent to the Office of State Assessment at the conclusion of the examination period.

Schools are encouraged to provide the most optimum testing environment and facilities for LEP students. LEP students may also be provided with a separate testing room, or small group administration.